their eyes, I hope they will believe that this was not so. My ambition to play at Coventry again shall be realised yet.[1]

At one time nothing seemed more unlikely than that I should be able to act in another Warwickshire town, a town whose name is known all over the world. But time and chance and my own great wish succeeded in bringing about my appearance at Stratford-on-Avon.

I can well imagine that the children of some strolling players used to have a hard time of it, but my mother was not one to shirk her duties. She worked hard at her profession and yet found it possible not to *drag* up her children, to live or die as it happened, but to bring them up to be healthy, happy, and wise—theatre-wise, at any rate. When her babies were too small to be left at the lodgings (which she and my father took in each town they visited as near to the theatre as possible), she would bundle us up in a shawl and put us to sleep in her dressing-room. So it was, that long before I spoke in a theatre, I slept in one.

Later on, when we were older and mother could leave us at home, there was a fire one night at our lodgings, and she rushed out of the theatre and up the street in an agony of terror. She got us out of the house all right, took us to the theatre, and went on with the next act as if nothing had happened. Such fortitude is commoner in our profession, I think, than in any other. We " go on with the next act " whatever happens, and if we know our business, no one in the audience will ever guess that any-

thing is wrong—that since the curtain last went down

[1] Since I wrote this, I have again visited my native town—this time to receive its civic congratulations on the occasion of my jubilee, and as recently as March of the present year I acted at the new Empire Theatre.